

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

Overview

An individual learning plan or ILP is a user (student) specific program or strategy of education or learning that takes into consideration the student's strengths and weaknesses (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). It is a tool that allows educators to plan, monitor, manage, and evaluate student achievement by identifying student needs and applying research-based interventions based on student needs.

This tool is commonly used by educators in schools as well as by supervisors in the business world. An ILP is often used by the employee to assess individual accomplishments and/or needs in essential knowledge, skill, and abilities.

The idea behind an ILP is that the needs of individual students are different, and thus, must be addressed differently (one size does not fit all). An ILP typically looks at student strengths and weaknesses, sets individual goals, outlines research based interventions to attain goals, assigns the individual responsible, sets a timeline, and, finally, evaluates progress attained. An ILP reflects a change in current practice in order to improve the academic achievement of a student.

ILPs are commonly used in programs for learning-disabled students, students of limited English proficiency, and Title I students. However, some states and districts have taken it a step further and required the use of ILPs for all students who are not proficient. In the state of Washington, individual learning plans are required for students who were not successful on any or all of the content areas of the Washington Assessment for Student Learning during the previous school year. Other districts require teachers to generate ILPs for all students who score more than six months below grade level on a uniform district or state test.

An ILP can be a powerful tool for individualizing instruction, promoting a team approach, fostering a collaborative effort in teaching (i.e., teacher, resource staff, and parents all working together to help the student) and, subsequently, raising the academic achievement of at-risk students.

Research

Research shows that teachers can provide more individual attention and instruction to students as needed when there is a documentable process in place to give students individual attention. Teachers must increasingly become more knowledgeable about the needs of their students and become greater advocates for each student's individual learning needs.

There is research to support both differentiating instruction and individualizing instruction as methods of raising achievement. An ILP can be a valuable tool for educators to use in differentiating and individualizing instruction to help schools attain the ultimate goal of raising student achievement.